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## House Moves to Boost Nanotechnology Funds

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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WASHINGTON (AP) -- The House on Wednesday approved the spending of \$2.4 billion over the next three years to foster research into nanotechnology, the science of manipulating single atoms and molecules to create new products.

The legislation, passed 405-19, would fund and coordinate research and development programs in the National Science Foundation, the Department of Energy, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the Environmental Protection Agency and the National Institute of Standards and Technology.

Sponsors, led by Science Committee Chairman Sherwood Boehlert, R-N.Y., said the bill is aimed at keeping the United States competitive in a field that has nearly unlimited scientific and economic potential.

They cited National Science Foundation estimates that there will be a \$1 trillion global market for nanotechnology in little more than a decade.

Nanotechnology, said Rep. Alcee Hastings, D-Fla., "holds the promise of a new Renaissance in our understanding of nature."

Nanotechnology has already been applied in such products as stain-resistant, wrinkle-free pants and ultraviolet-light blocking sunscreens. Coming soon are high-brightness displays for computer screens and televisions.

And in the future, sponsors said, nanotechnology can be used to develop sensors to detect biological agents, new materials for increased computer memory, cancer treatments that directly attack tumor cells without harming healthy surrounding tissue and nano-catalysts to allow cleaner chemical processes. NSF officials have predicted that all computer chips, half of pharmaceuticals and half of chemical catalysts someday will come from nanotechnology components.

President Clinton established a national nanotechnology initiative, which has been supported by President Bush. Congress approved some \$700 million for the program this year.

But Rep. Mike Honda, D-Calif., co-sponsor with Boehlert, said the initiative hasn't provided the needed interagency coordination or long-term commitment.

The legislation creates an interagency committee to ensure the efficient use of funds, requires annual reports to Congress and increases funding for universities to expand their nanotechnology programs and

to partner with companies trying to develop commercial products.

It also sets up an advisory panel to look into the social and ethical impact of manipulating atoms and molecules in such areas as genetics, the environment, privacy and intellectual property.

The House accepted an amendment by Rep. Eddie-Bernice Johnson, D-Texas, to set up small panels of ordinary citizens to examine societal and ethical issues arising from nanotechnology.

In the Senate, Sens. George Allen, R-Va., and Ron Wyden, D-Ore., have introduced similar legislation.

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The bill is H.R. 766

On the Net: House Science Committee: <http://www.house.gov/science>

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